

family—especially her husband, Larry—will be happy to have her around more often.

And although I will miss her, I know this is in no way a goodbye. I am positive she will continue to be active and touch the lives of those of us who have had the privilege of call her a friend.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mrs. Phyllis Causey, who exemplifies what it means to be an American, a Kentuckian, a Christian, and a public servant.

THE PENTAGON MUST BE AUDITED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, we've all heard of too big to fail when the Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson and President Bush bailed out a bunch of miscreants on Wall Street for their gambling and mistakes and putting taxpayers at risk, some principle that does not belong in the policy of this country. But now we have another one: Too big to be counted. Too big to be counted.

This year, the Pentagon will spend \$670 billion, about \$2 million a day, and it doesn't know where its money is. In fact, it often doesn't even know if it has spent money. Here are a few examples:

In March 2000, the Pentagon inspector general found that of the \$7.6 trillion—"t," trillion dollars—in accounting entries, about one-third of them—\$2.3 trillion, or \$8,000 for every man, woman, and child in America, was completely untraceable, completely untraceable. \$2.3 trillion, don't know where it went. Don't know if they bought something, if it was delivered. Who knows.

Then, in 2003, they found—and this is something I've talked about all through my years in Congress, the so-called inventory system at the Pentagon, which is absolutely absurd. The Army lost track of 56 airplanes, 32 tanks, and 36 missile command launch units. And while military leaders back in 2003 were scrambling around trying to find chemical and biological suits for our troops because of the risks in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, the Pentagon was selling suits at surplus on the Internet for 2 cents on the dollar. No suits for the troops. They're very expensive. Over here, we're selling them for 2 cents on the dollar to the general public. What is this all about?

Another year, they spent \$100 million for refundable airline tickets that they didn't use. Hey, what's \$100 million at the Pentagon? Chump change. They didn't ask for the refunds. They just stuck them in a drawer. That is \$100 million that didn't go to serve our national defense, supply our troops, or be saved and defray our deficit.

In fiscal year '10, half of the Pentagon's \$366 billion in contract awards were not competed. Half.

Now, these are pretty shocking numbers. And actually, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) and I on the floor here last spring got a little amendment in the Department of Defense bill to require that they conform to a 1994 law. In 1994, Congress said the Pentagon should be audited by 1997. Unfortunately, every year, the appropriators have said, Oh, no, no, no. That's too much to ask of the Pentagon.

Well, we got a little amendment in the bill here. We kind of snuck it by the DOD hawks over there who are protecting the incompetence over there, and they would have been audited. The Senate did the same thing. But to the rescue, the conference committee, behind closed doors. I was one of very few on the floor here who voted against closing the doors of the conference because they don't close the doors of the conference committee over there to talk about classified things that could risk our national security. They do it to cut deals like this.

So yesterday, they decided the Pentagon will not be audited. It can't be audited. In fact, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), one of our colleagues, said it would be insulting to require that we audit the Pentagon in a mandatory way by 2014. I mean, that's only 2 years from now. That's only a couple more trillion dollars from now. Boy, we wouldn't want to know where that money is going. We wouldn't want to know whether they are surplusing out stuff our troops need while they're paying for a contractor who didn't have to compete to buy the same stuff, and they say there is a shortage and we don't have enough. We wouldn't want to know these things. So we closed the conference and cut these stinking deals.

So here it is, once again, too big to be counted. This does not serve our men and women in uniform well. It does not serve the national defense needs of the United States of America, and it sure as heck doesn't serve the interests of the American taxpayers. The Pentagon must be audited like every other agency of Federal Government, and we should also throw in the Federal Reserve.

TRICIA MILLER, 2012 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, first today, I rise today to congratulate Tricia Miller of Centre County on receiving the 2012 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year award. An English teacher from the Penns Valley Area School District since 1994, Tricia is the first Centre County educator to receive the award in its 54-year history. In addition to teaching English, in 2009 Trish became the Penns Valley literacy coach for grades 7 through 12,

where she has introduced new instructional strategies in the classroom.

Many variables go into a great education, but it's having great teachers that matter most. Tricia Miller is the type of teacher that goes above and beyond. She is tirelessly committed to high achievement and the success of her students, which she has demonstrated year after year.

Tricia Miller is deserving of this award and recognition. We thank her for her commitment to the teaching profession and are proud that she will go to represent the State in the National Teacher of the Year competition. Congratulations, Teacher Tricia Miller.

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HOUSE PASSES EXTENSION LEGISLATION

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to take time this morning to address and celebrate a piece of legislation that we passed out of the House of Representatives last evening, largely, almost solely with just Republican support, but a bill that deserved bipartisan support because it's great for the entire Nation.

This is a bill that addresses many of the extension bills that were lingering and will soon expire at the end of the year. In particular, there are three parts I just want to touch on briefly this morning that are incredibly important for the citizens of this Nation, and I think also parts that are transformational. And it's rare that we see a transformational piece of legislation out of this body.

First of all, the tax cuts. Tax cuts for all Americans. This is a tax cut that was actually paid for, not one that added to the national debt or certainly one that threatened in any way the integrity of the Social Security fund. I am very proud to be able to support this bill and to do it in a proper way, to pay for and allow the citizens of this country to keep money in their own pockets. Certainly they are better prepared to make decisions on how money is spent.

Secondly, the changes in the extension of the unemployment compensation. We have taken steps to move unemployment towards a workforce development program as opposed to just an entitlement program. Unemployment is important and should be used to return people to work, and the provisions of the bill that were approved yesterday do just that. It allows States to do drug screening. We've put a lot of money into retraining people for jobs when they are on unemployment or through the Workforce Investment Act only to find that there is a percentage that aren't eligible to work because they can't pass a drug test. This provision gives people a reason to clean their lives up. It takes it from 99 to 59 weeks, which is an appropriate move.

One of the last provisions, which I think is maybe one of the most important: If you are an individual and need unemployment compensation, and you don't have a high school degree or a

GED, it requires you to enroll in a qualified GED program. Education is the key to success in this country.

Finally, as a part of this bill that I was proud to support, it provides 2 years of preventing an over 27 percent cut to the Medicare part B Medicare reimbursement rates for both hospitals and physicians.

As a former health care provider, manager within rural hospitals, I know how devastating those cuts would be, and I was very proud that not only did we address that, we did it with more certainty than has ever been done in the past since 1997, when we did that for a 2-year period.

Mr. Speaker, I am very appreciative of my colleagues for supporting this bill and passing it out of the House. And I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the Senate give it the same full due diligence in quickly moving it out of that side of Congress so that the American people can benefit from all of the provisions within that extension package.

END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN NOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday The New York Times reported that our Ambassador in Afghanistan, Ryan C. Crocker, told a group of journalists that U.S. troops could stay in Afghanistan long past the President's 2014 deadline if the Afghan Government asked us to stay.

The very next day, The New York Times reported Afghan President Hamid Karzai blaming foreigners, including the United States, for the corruption that is so rampant in his government. He had the audacity to say this at an event marking International Anti-Corruption Day.

Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt countries on the face of the earth. Transparency International ranks Afghanistan as the second most corrupt government, right behind Somalia and North Korea, which tied for first place.

So I ask my colleagues, why should we shed a single drop more of blood, sacrifice the lives of our service men and women, for a corrupt government that doesn't even have the decency to take responsibility for its own failures.

Enough is enough. We have spent over \$440 billion on military operations alone in Afghanistan since 9/11. In 2012 we aim to spend another \$113 billion. By this time next year, our total spending on the war in Afghanistan, just the military operations, will be around \$557 billion. That's over half a trillion dollars.

And when I say "spend," I really mean borrow, because from day one of the Afghanistan war—and the Iraq war, for that matter—we have not paid for the military operations in these wars. We have borrowed nearly every single penny of that money, put it on the na-

tional credit card, let it rack up over a quarter of our cumulative deficit, and help explode our debt year after year for a decade.

Sadly, when it comes to paying for this war, too many in Washington are silent.

Mr. Speaker, over 1,800 service men and women have died in Afghanistan, 42 of them from Massachusetts. Over 14,000 wounded. Husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. Holes created in families and communities that can never be filled, losses that will be felt for a generation or more.

Each month the tally of dead and wounded gets higher. 2010 was the deadliest year for American troops in the history of the Afghanistan war. And 2011, a close second.

We have become numb to the numbers. We don't even hear them any more. But these losses resonate around family kitchen tables in the homes of the deployed every day and night of the year.

We all know that the human cost of the war is found not only on the battlefields of Afghanistan. It's also found in veterans hospitals and counseling clinics around the country. We continue to struggle with soaring rates of traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress and suicides among our soldiers and our veterans. So many leave the service or try and carry on military careers wounded in both body and soul.

Even if we were to leave Afghanistan tomorrow—and I'm so very glad to see that our troops are coming home from Iraq—our war debt will continue for decades. And for what? For 10 years of support for a corrupt government in Afghanistan? Ten years of sacrificing our brave uniformed men and women? Ten years of borrowing money we never had? This war is no longer about going after al Qaeda—which I voted to do. Osama bin Laden is dead. Instead, we're now bogged down in a seemingly endless occupation in support of an incompetent and corrupt Karzai government. This is not what I voted for.

So yes, I'm really worried when I pick up the newspaper and read Ambassador Crocker saying we may be in Afghanistan for years beyond 2014. The American people are way ahead of the Congress and the White House on this issue. They want this war ended now. But it seems that Washington just doesn't get it. But when all is said and done, the responsibility for continuing or ending the war is right here in this Chamber. We approved this war, we must now take the responsibility to end it.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, I will vote against the conference report on the FY 2012 National Defense Authorization bill. The defense bill includes many good and important provisions, but it does nothing, absolutely nothing to wind down the war in Afghanistan.

It's way past time to bring our troops home from Afghanistan. I can't authorize any more funding that doesn't ex-

plicitly call on the President to plan and carry out the accelerated removal of our troops.

Bring them home, Mr. President. Bring them all home now.

[From the New York Times, Dec. 10, 2011]

U.S. TROOPS COULD STAY IN AFGHANISTAN
PAST DEADLINE, ENVOY SAYS

(By Rod Nordland)

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN—The American ambassador to Afghanistan on Saturday raised the possibility that United States combat troops could stay in the country beyond the 2014 deadline that the White House had set for their withdrawal.

The ambassador, Ryan C. Crocker, speaking at a roundtable event with a small group of journalists, said that if the Afghan government wanted American troops to stay longer, the withdrawal could be slowed. "They would have to ask for it," he said. "I could certainly see us saying, 'Yeah, makes sense.'"

He emphasized, however, that no such decision had been made.

White House officials said that Mr. Crocker's comments were consistent with its previously stated position.

"The president never excluded the possibility that there would be some U.S. forces here, but he stressed that security would be under Afghan lead by 2014," said the embassy spokeswoman, Eileen O'Connor. "The president has always spoken of a responsible winding down of the efforts here, so talk of the possibility of some troops still being here post-2014 is not a change in policy."

But Mr. Crocker's comments were an explicit acknowledgment that the post-2014 forces may include combat troops, not just the trainers and advisers who had been publicly mentioned before.

His comments came as the administration was engaged in discussions with the Afghan government on arrangements after 2014. At a conference in Bonn, Germany, last week, President Hamid Karzai and other Afghan officials called for political and military support for at least another decade.

Referring to the NATO summit meeting in Lisbon last year at which Western leaders agreed to transfer security responsibility to Afghan forces by 2014, Mr. Crocker said: "There is nothing in the Lisbon declaration on 2014 that precludes an international military presence beyond 2014. That is to be determined by the parties, who could be numerous, not just us, as we get closer to that date."

In June, President Obama announced that American troop withdrawals would begin the following month, with 10,000 of the roughly 101,000 American troops then in the country to leave by Dec. 31, and an additional 23,000 to follow by the summer of 2012. "Our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead," he said. "Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security." Of the first 10,000, 4,000 have left, according to a senior NATO official. In most of those cases, personnel who had been scheduled to leave were not replaced, the official said.

"We are on a timeline, as you know," Mr. Crocker said. "Ten thousand out by the end of the year, that is being met." With the additional 23,000 by September 2012, he added, "that basically recovers the surge"—the reinforcements Mr. Obama ordered two years ago.

"Beyond that, there are no decisions," he said, adding, "And as far as I'm aware, there are no formal recommendations yet."